

THE SOCIALIST PARTY of GREAT BRITAIN

Report of the Proceedings of the 67th Annual Conference

held at:

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday,
9th, 10th and 11th April, 1971

Attendances at Conference:

		<u>Delegates</u> <u>present</u>	<u>Branches</u> <u>represented</u>
<u>Friday</u>	morning	28	16
	afternoon	34	16
<u>Saturday</u>		34	16
<u>Sunday</u>	morning	26	14
	(not represented+ S.W.London, W.London)		
	afternoon	28	15
	(not represented: W.London)		

Hackney Branch not represented throughout Conference.

Financial Statement:

<u>Collections:</u>	Friday	£22.75
	" evening Meeting	14.20
	Saturday	8.73
	Sunday	10.77
<u>Literature sales:</u>	Friday	6.99
	Saturday	2.58
	Sunday	80
<u>Canteen profits:</u>		£19.00 £85.82

<u>Expenditure:</u>	Conway Hall	£111	
	Carotaker	£ 5	
	Fares	£ 62	
			£178.00

Excess expenditure: £ 92.18

Comrade J. Edmonds was elected Chairman and Comrade E. Guy as Vice-Chairman.

It was agreed that Standing Orders Committee act as Tellers, and that Comrade Vallance, Central Branch, should be allowed to represent Edinburgh Branch.

Standing Orders Committee reported that because of the postal strike it had not been possible for them to comply with Rule 23, and Conference was asked to approve the Agenda. This was agreed on a resolution from Mid.Herts and Westminster.

All the Amendments to Rule which had been submitted were lost with little discussion - the voting is given below:-

Haringey RULE 2 "Delete in lines 2 and 3 the words 'the only receipt recognised being the official dues stamp'" Lost 21.25

Edinburgh RULE 2 "That Rule 2 be amended to read 'each member shall pay 2s.0d.'" Lost 17.30

Haringey RULE 8 "Insert in line 10 between the words 'above' and 'shall' - "or to contribute to Head Office funds in accordance with Rule 9" (Fall)

Haringey RULE 9 "Re-word the Rule to read "each Branch shall pay towards Head Office funds 50 p.per quarter per member except those excused under Rule 2". Lost 16.27

Haringey RULE 10 "Add at the end of Rule 10 'and leaflets expressing Party Policy'" Lost 17.29

Manchester RULE 10 "At the end of Rule 10 the following be added 'and leaflets expressing Party policy". Not voted on

Manchester RULE 17 "Insert in line 2 after the words 'the Party literature' the words 'that is any journal pamphlet or leaflet in the name of the Party nationally'". Lost 17.29

(Manchester RULE 17 "Insert in line 7 after the words 'the Party' the words 'except the work of the Branches'".

(Swansea RULE 17 "Insert in line 2 after the words 'the Party literature' the words 'that is any journal pamphlet or leaflet in the name of the Party nationally'".

("Delete in line 6 after the words "Socialist Parties abroad" the words 'and otherwise generally supervise the work of the Party'".

(Taken as a whole Lost 14.32

ITEM for DISCUSSION Haringey The need for the E.C. to initiate a plan for training Conference Chairman so as to avoid the situation where E.C. members are Chairman of Conference discussing E.C. business.

Haringey Comrade Buick. This would merely be an extension of Rule 16 which lays it down that a member of the E.C. cannot sit as delegates to Conference or Delegate Meeting, and it is only logical that E.C. members should not act as Chairmen at Conference. The Branch was not suggesting that E.C. members who have been Chairmen in the past have abused their position but there was a genuine lack of members who had been trained for this work. Nothing resolved

RESOLUTIONS

Swansea "That this Conference is in favour of changing the Party's name to 'The World Socialist Party'".

Haringey Amendment: "Delete the word 'World'".
(Haringey announced that they would be voting against their Amendment).

Comrade Ambridge, Swansea, was not himself in favour of this resolution but Swansea thought it would assist Party propaganda. Birmingham. The Socialist Party of Great Britain suggests some sort of national socialist movement, whereas we are a world-wide movement. 'The World Socialist Party' makes this clear.

Amendment Lost 37-nil

Resolution " 11-27

Haringey "No candidate in a ballot for members to the E.C. or Party Officers may be a member of the Ballot Committee for the period of that ballot".

Comrade Buick stated that members of the E.C. would still be able to be members of the Ballot Committee but a candidate cannot take part in the election and vote. Westminster and Central Organiser were opposed to this - it looks as though you don't trust Party members. If you want to eliminate suspicion you should get an outside body to do the work.

Carried 23-20

Haringey "That this Conference holds that in the best interests of the Party no further private advertisement by individual members should be permitted until a thorough investigation into the implications for the reputation and effective democratic functioning of the Party has been made".

Amendment: Birmingham: "That the words 'Using the name of the Party' be inserted after the word 'members'".

Amendment: Mid.Herts. "Delete all after 'permitted'".

Comrade Buick. The adverts. by Comrade L.E. Weidberg began over two years ago with a full page advert. in the New Statesman under the false title of an official announcement by the S.P.G.B. The E.C. took action to stop the name of the Party appearing. A later decision by the E.C. allowed the member responsible to advertise the "S.S". We are not only concerned about the advertisements but about allowing this situation to continue. The Party has no control whatsoever as to what goes in to what is almost a mini-Standard and we do not know the results of the advertisements nor of the sort of answers that have come in. These adverts. which are now transferred to 'Tribune' have nothing to do with the S.P.G.B. but our opponents are taking them to be official articles by the S.P.G.B. Our resolution does not prohibit members from putting in adverts. We want an enquiry into the whole matter. Mid.Herts., Camden and W.London thought an enquiry unnecessary and that the normal procedure of the Party was sufficient. Swansea urged caution against laying down a general ruling arising out of the conduct of one member - the E.C. has all the powers it needs to deal with this matter.

Amendment Mid.Herts. Lost 21-23

" Birmingham Carried 26-18

As sub.Resolution " 33-11

Ealing "That this Conference instructs the E.C. to purchase equipment up to the value of £2,500 for printing the "S.S" and other Party literature".

Amendment. Birmingham: "That the words 'up to the value of £2,500 be deleted from the Ealing Branch resolution".

" Mid.Herts. "Add 'subject to sufficient working support from Party members'".

Ealing. Now that the Party has a little more money, amongst the demands to H.C. for funds for various activities, the time has come for the Party to consider this

matter seriously or reject it altogether. We could have an off-set printing apparatus at H.O. for which £2,500 should be sufficient to get the equipment necessary. There are members who are prepared to work on it but they will not come forward unless the machinery is already in existence. Mid.Herts. Considerable enquiries have been made in the Party for members to do this work but with very poor response - we should not throw money away without guaranteed support from members able to use this equipment. Lewisham. Opposed - we are a voluntary organisation with a limited membership able to work. We are short of regular writers for the "S.S.". Do not add to our problems by getting machinery which may eventually rot in the basement. Haringey expressed a similar view and Westminster were of the opinion that £2,500 was, in any case, only half the amount which would be required. (Mid.Herts. disagreed with this and reiterated that £2,500 would be sufficient). Swansea The members who are in favour of this should have come to Conference with more technical information. Manchester were in favour and thought that the Party should provide all Branches with sufficient members with their own Roneo or Gestetner duplicators.

In reply, Comrade Critchfield stated that with our own printing press there would be lower production costs, we could turn out short leaflets and we could keep the plates of our pamphlets and bring them up to date more quickly. It would also solve some of the S.S.P.C's present problems.

Mid.Herts. Amendment	Lost 15 - 30
Birmingham "	" 14 - 30
Ealing resolution	" 11 - 32

Manchester "This Conference instructs the E.C. to aid all interested Branches in purchasing duplicating equipment".

Comrade Bradley stated this would help to keep Branches alive and would be an incentive to members to be active in local problems. Lost 17 - 29

Manchester's resolution to implement the 'Knight' Report was also Lost 14 - 29

Edinburgh "That this Conference is of the opinion that the present method of issuing membership cards each year is unnecessary and costly and should be rescinded as soon as possible".

Addendum; Birmingham: "but that a date-stamp and treasurer's signature should be put into membership cards each year for members in good standing".

Comrade McDonagh. A date stamp and Treasurer's signature for members in good standing would prevent members who have left the Party claiming membership. Camden pointed out that this would require an amendment to rule. (The cost of printing 1,000 membership Cards is approx. £40).

Addendum	Lost 12 - 31
Resolution	" 20 - 26

The Chairman here introduced Comrade Rab of the W.S.P.U.S. Comrade Rab, as fraternal delegate of the American Party, brought greetings from the American comrades and best wishes for a fruitful Conference, thrashing out matters of concern to the S.P.G.B. Comrade Rab went on to speak of his experiences over the years in the socialist movement from as far back as 1954. He was optimistic for the future, regarding optimism as a test of our understanding of social forces. Our latent strength is that history, science and even necessity are all on our side. There had been an increase in their membership over the last few months of 8 or 9 new members, all under the age of 30, and there was an increase in applications for subscriptions to the "W.S" of 20.

The General Secretary read to delegates letters of greeting from:

S.P. of New Zealand (Comrade Higden, Auckland) with an up to date report of their activities.

S.P. of New Zealand (Comrade Everson, Wellington).

Greetings were also received from Comrade Vogt on behalf of our comrades in Austria. Their letter mentioned the financial difficulties they were having in keeping up the publication of their journal, the I.F.W, and their sadness at the loss of Comrade R.Frank who had been their mainstay for so many years, giving them his valuable help and encouragement.

Westminster (Fl. Resolution, combined with a resolution from Camden): "That this Conference recognises the great work which has been done in Austria by the Austrian Party and urges them to continue. The E.C. is requested to give the Austrian comrades all possible support, both financially and otherwise, in the production of the I.F.W".

Carried unanimously

ITEM for DISCUSSION

Westminster:

Branch autonomy

Comrade May. It appears obvious that there is some dissatisfaction, particularly amongst provincial Branches in this matter, five Branches out of seven having just voted against any direction by the E.C. Unfortunately, no provincial delegate has stated why they wish to alter the present rules. The Propaganda Committee receives requests at times from provincial Branches for speakers or for financial help, which are always met to the best of our ability. We have tried to set up regional committees but this did not get off the ground. We do not know what you really want. Edinburgh said what they wanted was autonomy in the production of literature. The E.C. should only function to supervise the general work of the Party with the exception of literature. Any member who has been accepted by the Party can put the Party's case. Lewisham: A second opinion in regard to any of our publications is always advisable - this does not mean that the E.C. is dictatorial. The E.C. is elected by the Party and if you don't like the way they work you have the remedy in your own hands. Swansea: were not asking for Branch autonomy but that the E.C. should ease up on the controls they exercise on Party members. The growth of the Party comes mainly from outside London and these members should not be stultified in the work they are trying to do in their areas. Comrade Holford, Brighton Group, did not wish to criticise Branches and would like them eventually to be able to produce their own literature, but it needs skill and experience to produce good literature and we should go about this gradually. Haringey agreed that some vetting of literature was necessary at the present time but this does not mean it should be done by the E.C. To have literature vetted by the S.S.P.C. would be a better idea as they have greater experience - it would also reduce the amount of work required of the E.C. Comrade D'Arcy (E.C.) There seems to be a view among Branches that the man on the spot is a better judge of local conditions. This attitude should be avoided like the plague. We should never try to put our point of view in connection with local conditions as they see them - this becomes private to the Branches and will not help extend our case. If something should happen locally which is of great importance it will become a national issue and we should have a go at it. The Party's case is of general application and when members speak they speak on behalf of the Party and not as a Branch dealing with local conditions. You cannot get instant experience, and enthusiasm is not sufficient. Over the last five years the Party has given more addresses to other organisations than ever before in its history and yet the number of speakers passing the speakers' test has gone down. There have been three occasions during the last few years where Branches have rushed in and printed literature which was not in accordance with the Party's case. Comrade Baldwin (E.C.): The Party's case is no different locally than it is anywhere else and the E.C. can deal with things very quickly. Overall effort must be Party effort, not isolated effort. Branches are entitled to feel that in all they do they have the backing of H.O. Whether we like it or not, the whole Party is represented at H.O, including Swansea, who have the power to nominate and vote for an E.C. to carry out certain work. All literature is Party literature and there should be an attitude of co-operation and one-ness in the Party.

Camden: All literature should stand the test of time and a second opinion from experienced members is always valuable. New members, in particular, should appreciate this. We are extending our efforts more outside London and we are not maintaining the necessary set-up to absorb this into the S.P.C.B. in as useful a way as possible. A Committee might be set up to deal with urgent matters for the Provinces. Comrade Steele, Birmingham. The E.C. has no literature training and no qualifications. It is better to get a leaflet out quickly even with mistakes. Urgency is important. Comrade May, winding up: We are dealing with this matter in the context of Party organisation. There are 9 Branches in London (one not represented), 7 in the Provinces, and there are also 200 members in Central Branch who for one reason or another cannot be organised in Branches.

If you cannot help the chance

If you find yourself the only member in your Branch that is qualified to speak, why cannot three of the younger members go along and sit in the background? It would help them to become speakers. Regarding literature, the E.C. would welcome the chance to look at literature - make the E.C. work on things that are really important. I do not think you would be turned down. We also have a telephone and a postal service. Regarding Edinburgh's 'Seven Days for Socialism', we did our best to send speakers - did you feel the heavy hand of the E.C. there?

Comrade Lawrence, Central Branch Secretary: It is fair to say that out of a membership of 200 only about 30 Ballot Papers have been received, and it is always about the same figure. There is a tremendous amount of work involved which has often to be done very quickly. It might be worth while at some time putting down as a question to be discussed whether the limited use that Central Branch members make of this scheme justifies the amount of work entailed.

ITEM for DISCUSSION

Westminster Is our accepted education classes system relevant to the needs of members in the 70s?

Comrade Goodman: In spite of the work Comrade D'Arcy has put into organising classes the response has been disappointing both from those who support classes and those who do not. The Branch is concerned as to why classes are not successful and why there seems to be a lack of enthusiasm. We have lots of members who are anxious to learn but for some reason or another are not availing themselves of the facilities available. Are our present aims in teaching suitable for today? Comrade Buick, for Education Committee: The fact that you have two different bodies concerned with teaching results from a mix-up over a Conference resolution, which has not helped matters. The fact that nobody can be found to turn up to the educational classes that have been organised proves that they are not relevant to new members. A suggestion was put forward that a different approach was needed, that the work of the Education Committee ought to be to produce booklets, or study courses, or to organise education classes at Branch level. There are at present various Branch lectures followed by discussion. We produced a study guide to "Value, Price and Profit" which was of benefit to Central Branch members who cannot take part in classes organised here. Comrade D'Arcy, Education Organiser: It was agreed with the E.C. that we should try to get a speakers' class running and that a condition of entry to the classes should be that applicants should have read "Wage, Labour and Capital", "Value Price and Profit", and "Socialism, Utopian and Scientific". No members have applied to join this class. The last class which was run here was a general knowledge class. It started with 7 or 8 and trickled down to 4. We also ran an economics class which was reasonably successful. Mid.Herts. and Westminster have been running their own classes with some success. Branch autonomy in this kind of activity is good, and as far as I am concerned, if Branches want to do this they can have assistance from H.O. Tape recordings can be sent. We have also tried the Teach-In method and we have also had Schools. But members should at least attend a speakers class - there would be three or four experienced teachers to assist. Members are passing this by.

ITEM for DISCUSSION

Westminster: "Socialist Standard" - methods of improving presentation and contents.

Comrade May: Westminster think that over the past couple of years there have been far too many book reviews in the "S.S.". We realise that they can be an important and interesting part of any journal but, speaking from memory, it seems that a quarter of the "S.S." has been taken up reviewing books that have been published. While the subjects of these books is of importance to the publisher who has taken a gamble on whether or not he will be able to sell it, the subject itself is not necessarily of national importance. Rather than devote much of our writing to subjects that have been written by another author we should be endeavouring to cover these fields ourselves from the socialist point of view. Just attacking an author about what he says about something is not necessarily a good thing. We feel that the presentation of the "S.S." over the last few years compares unfavourably with those of four or five years ago. The S.S.P.C. might consider setting up a writers class or a correspondence class with younger members coming in. Bearing in mind that as a quarter of

the membership is in Central Branch and nearly 50% of Branches are not in London anyway, whatever we are able to do from an educational point of view in regard to writers classes can only cater for a small number of members. Comrade Young: The "S.S" represents our main propaganda work and the fact is it is not working very well and no one is entirely satisfied. I appreciate deeply and sincerely what this job means to members who have to do this work month after month, who also have their own work to do and with domestic responsibilities, and I do not like to criticise. But the whole tone and atmosphere of the journal gives an impression of a rather respectable old granny on the side lines looking at things from afar - until we get socialism nothing will be any good! I fail to see the aggression, the combative note. There are now a flood of the works of Marx but the "S.S" does not go into this enough. I do not agree there is a shortage of competent writers. I can mention a dozen now who have been excellent contributors but they are never asked. When I write an article I do not even get an acknowledgment. With the immense amount of stuff that needs replying to today the work should be apportioned out to cover different fields. If you want book reviews you have someone in the Party who knows what has happened in Russia. We should look at the way the S.S.P.C. is organised and try to draw up a list of those who have been regular writers in the past, try to contact them and ask for contributions. They will be forthcoming. At the moment the "S.S" is mainly the work of a handful, and this ought not to be. It is a pity Comrade Weidberg does not write for the "S.S" - he pays someone else to publish his stuff. We should try to enlarge the corps of writers - they are here in the Party. If you wish I can give you a list. Make arrangements to mobilise them.

Comrade D'Arcy endorsed Comrade Young's views. The "S.S" lately has become something in the nature of a journal which comments on things: it does not have the projection of the socialist case. It is more like a review magazine or a socialist onlooker. Perhaps the Committee is trying to be neighbourly, or perhaps it is a question of style. In the old days it was always possible to get a copy of the "S.S" and be able to run a meeting on its contents. Now we have 'safe' writing with nothing contentious in it. It has become a rather polished bourgeois journal. Comrade Vanny put the blame on the members. You should not have to ask members to write articles. Glasgow members criticise the "S.S" but they do not get down to writing themselves. If you do not like the contents of the "S.S" the remedy is in your own hands. Comrade Knight endorsing Comrade Young's remarks, said that if the S.S.P.C. asks for an article they print it but if you send in an article unasked it does not go in, and the S.S.P.C. do not give reasons why the article is not used. They should look over their contributors and circularise them. Comrade Howard, for the S.S.P.C. pointed out that it would help considerably if writers would send in articles without waiting to be asked for them. Comrade Buick, S.S.P.C. denied that when articles are turned down an explanation is not sent. He stressed what is in their report to the E.C, that during the latter part of 1970 they were suffering from serious problems causing the quality to decline. He drew attention to the fact that there are eight different writers in the present issue and the May issue will have six or seven. The problem of shortage of writers is being overcome. A circular has been sent out asking for writers to send in articles. He thought we should have a number of regular features and that one page should be book reviews. There is an article this month by Comrade Weidberg. Re presentation, the great problem has been to get someone to design the front cover which needs someone skilled to do this work. The publication at present costs approx. £200 and the inclusion of photographs, as suggested earlier by Comrade May, would put the price up further and we would have to have E.C. authority for this. Comrade May suggested we should try to get members to write articles on specific subjects - it could be arranged by telephone - specific subjects which would fit in with a particular issue the S.S.P.C. has in mind.

RESOLUTIONS

Manchester "The title of the "S.S" to be changed to 'The Standard'"
Manchester (Amendment): "The title of the "S.S" to be changed to 'The Standard', 'The New World', 'One World', or any other title in keeping with our aims and which does not mislead".

Comrade Bradley: The title 'Socialist Standard' connects the Party with the Labour Party. Certain shops will not take stuff which is connected with 'socialism'.

It does not matter how good the front cover looks if people have the idea they are going to get Labour Party stuff - "we have had enough of 'socialism'". We think the best title would be 'One World', or perhaps 'New World', or any title in keeping with our aims. Swansea challenged Manchester to prove that the use of the word 'socialism' is misleading. Those who have no knowledge of a subject are easily led but you don't cure that by trying to kid the politically ignorant that you are selling something other than a socialist journal. If you do not like being in a socialist organisation, handling socialist literature, say so. Do not disguise it, or try to kid us here that if we drop the word 'socialist' we shall achieve the millennium, even in Manchester. If you want to increase the sales of the "S.S." go out and try and sell it or distribute it. Redbridge was opposed to a change of title. Ballard, Publicity Committee. It should be obvious that the word 'socialist' is entirely misleading to thousands of people all over the world. It either means the Labour Party, nationalisation, or Russian oppression. A lot of people who would be interested in a free society find it repellent. This is a problem we have to deal with and it is not simple. You cannot get rid of the word straight away. We are dealing with a history of socialist literature. In terms of publicity initial contact with people is most important. It is certainly not wrong to try and use words and language which are not misleading, and which are positive. With the media as it is today you have to be publicity conscious. Do not alienate people in the first place by using words they detest. When you have gained contact then you can go into explanations as to what you mean. Comrade McClatchie: disagreed with Comrade Ballard. When do people change the name of their paper? When they are going down, like the S.D.F. As to misleading people, I defy anybody to put forward a name which is not misleading to some. In any case, how can a word which has a whole history behind it mislead? There is no perfect name. The "S.S." has been the "S.S." since the beginning - why not carry it on? Mid.Herts. and Glasgow both endorsed Comrade McClatchie's view. Birmingham supported Manchester.

Manchester: I have been accused of doing a con trick. This is not so. It is a matter of getting socialism over to people, to show that we are in the class struggle. People are divorced from us. I have to take the "S.S." back from shops because they do not sell. I cannot see anything objectionable in what we are suggesting. We are only concerned with the cover and the title, not the contents.

Amendment Lost 4 - 43

Resolution carried 3 - 43

Manchester "That the Declaration of Principles appearing in the "Socialist Standard" be reduced to the same size as that appearing on the back of the Party's membership cards".

Addendum: Lewisham: "and that the size of the membership card be increased to the size of the "Socialist Standard".

Lewisham: Their addendum was only put in to show how ridiculous they thought the resolution was. Manchester: We think too much space is taken up in the "S.S." by the D. of P. An article on socialism could be put in its place. Comrade Ambridge: Swansea: Lewisham have given the resolution what it deserves. I am not happy about the situation. I assume that the next move from Manchester or somebody else will be to remove it altogether. I suspect that some members of this Party think we do not need the D. of P. - all we need is the Object. But the D. of P. has been the means of anchoring this Party to its Object. Manchester: We do not wish to take the D. of P. out of the "S.S.", only to reduce it in size.

Addendum Lost 3 - 42

Resolution " 3 - 43

Edinburgh "That Branches have power to produce their own Literature"

Edinburgh: We are not suggesting that the E.C. has exercised undue control - it is on the question of principle. The E.C. is ignorant of local conditions and there is a time lag in getting literature out. Under the democratic structure of the Party all members have equal right to participate in Party activities. We feel there is mistrust regarding Branches. We think that literature should not be vetted by the E.C. but by the Branch. Comrade May: We have all got an equal right to take part in the work of the Party but I have not an equal right as an official to sit on the Ballot Committee. Those who have only been in the Party a short while are not as capable of writing a pamphlet or an article as those who have been in the Party for a number of years. As a member of the Propaganda Committee, having to send speakers

to various places, we take into account the fact that some members are not as qualified as others to put the Party's case. W. London agreed with Edinburgh.

Lost 17 - 29

(It was pointed out here that if the above resolution had been carried it would have conflicted with Party rules).

Edinburgh: "In future more money to be spent on the cover of the "S.S" (more colours etc) to try to increase sales".

Amendment: Westminster "Delete 'the cover of' and '(more colours etc)'".

The point made here was that more colour in the "S.S" and a more attractive cover rather than a simple line drawing would enable the "S.S" to compare more favourably with other magazines which sell in large quantities. Comrade A.D. Arcy, Westminster: agreed with Edinburgh and suggested we should use photographs more and even a bigger issue if the occasion merits it. W. London were opposed. If the occasion arose when it was important to spend more money on the "S.S" this could always be done. There is no need for a resolution. We should not try to compete with 'Red Moles'. Mid. Herts. supported both the resolution and the amendment. Swansea: What you are looking for is a short cut. You do not increase sales by these means. The presentation is unimportant and the cover is only important when you go out and try to sell it. Don't lay down a ruling that certain money must be spent. If you have more money to spend do not spend it on the cover, put more in it, make it larger. Glasgow: supported the resolution.

Resolution as amended by Westminster: Carried 28 - 14

Edinburgh: "This Conference is of the opinion that due to the constant late arrival of the "S.S" the Party look seriously into printing their own journal and also find ways of improving distribution".

Edinburgh complained that the "S.S" always arrives late. Comrade Buick, S.S.P.C. said that the reason for this has nothing to do with the printers but depended on the despatch of the "S.S" from H.O. Comrade D. Arcy (E.C): We should look at the possibility of despatching the "S.S" direct from the printers, and that the allocation of "S.S" intended for Glasgow and Edinburgh could be sent to Glasgow for distribution. We should also consider the possibility of despatching the "S.S" by passenger train. Gen. Secretary: It is the intention of the E.C. as soon as they have their sub-Committees appointed and working, to get these Committees to look into the problem of distribution to Branches and of bulk distribution by the printers. Manchester could be a central point for Branches nearby.

Lost 14 - 28

Edinburgh: "This Conference is of the opinion that the "S.S" should be pre-dated".

Edinburgh: There appears to be difficulty in getting quick distribution of the "S.S" and the suggestion we make is that, for example, the March issue should be pre-dated April.

Little discussion:

Lost 12 - 34

Westminster "That in the make-up of future Party pamphlets the E.C. gives greater consideration to the requirements of trade distribution".

Westminster: We would like to suggest a larger-looking pamphlet - add an inch to the edge, and have a spine backing, so that the pamphlet seems more in the nature of a small booklet. There should be less text printed on a particular page. When a paragraph comes to only half a page the other half should be left blank. And we should try to give shops a better discount. Edinburgh did not wish the Party's name to be used on the cover - only the subject. Comrade Hardy, Pamphlets Cttee. We can only sell a small proportion of our pamphlets through the trade. People like W.H. Smiths will tell you that they would rather give space to a best seller than try to push the sales of something which is comparatively unknown. Space is limited and they want a quick turnover. You will notice that nothing remains on their shelves for long. Regarding a spine, and spacing pages so that you will have spare pages, and chapters all starting at the head of the page, these things will cost

considerably more. We always do give one-third discount to the trade. In connection with cover designs, we ask people to submit designs and we are to some extent in their hands.

Other members pointed out that there are other trade channels - we could try publishers who sell political paper backs. A larger pamphlet would cost more but it could be sold at a higher price. A front cover without the Party's name on it could be made quite attractive and our name could be shown on the back. The Publicity Committee spent £65 on advertising, resulting in the selling of 16 copies only of the War Pamphlet: It would have been better to go to Hyde Park.

Carried 45 - 1

Swansea: "That the E.C. be instructed that in future all pamphlets shall be produced only by the authorisation of Conference".

Swansea suggested that the E.C. before it commits itself to spending a large sum of money should come before Conference and explain what are the possibilities of selling the pamphlet. We should be sure it is a good proposition before we propose spending something like £700-1,000. This would not cause delay as pamphlets take a long time to produce anyway.

Some members opposed this as a waste of time. Conference can decide whether or not there is a need for a particular pamphlet but Conference cannot decide any better than the E.C. how it will sell and how many copies it is advisable to print. Putting this responsibility on Conference will not get us anywhere.

Lost 7 - 39

Camden: "That this Conference is of the opinion that the Object and D. of P. should appear on all Election Statements and also in the "S.S", Pamphlets and statements of Party policy".

Amend. Haringey: "Delete 'and Declaration of Principles'".

Camden: The resolution speaks for itself. Comrade Buick. The resolution goes too far. The Branch is in favour of the D. of P. being shown in the "S.S", Pamphlets and even in leaflets, but the resolution commits us to having the D. of P. on every single leaflet and we should be unable to publish a very short leaflet. The D. of P. is 270 words long. There is no Party ruling except with regard to the Object. The E.C. should be able to use its discretion. Swansea supported the resolution and opposed the amendment. Westminster was divided on the matter.

Amendment Lost 6 - 40

Resolution Carried: 35 - 10

Westminster "This Conference, whilst recognising the desirability of contesting elections, urges the E.C. and Branches to give greater consideration to the Constituencies and areas to be contested and to the detailed programming of any campaign".

Comrade May deplored the results of the last election campaign. He thought the Parliamentary Committee were to some extent at fault in choosing to contest S.W. London. We spent best part of £456 contesting an area which was physically unattractive and politically dead, and we thought this was a waste of money. We did a little better in the north. On the Saturday before the Poll there were only about 4 members at H.O, whereas there should have been 30 or 40. The whole campaign was never properly planned. In future if we are going to contest a general election we should be more concerned with the area we choose, its geographical position, the availability of it for members, and whether it is an area which has a certain political background and a political interest. But even when all these things have been considered they will have little value if members are not prepared to do the work that is involved. Comrade Buick opposed the resolution as pious. He thought that Comrade May had given a misleading impression of the success or failure of the campaign. We all expected the election to take place in October and not in June as it turned out. The Branch who ran the campaign in Hornsey, had asked permission of the E.C. to adopt a Parliamentary candidate over a year prior to the election. We were able to get letters in the press, we organised several meetings and about 14 or 15 members assisted. He thought the campaign in Hornsey was well prepared. The use of the postal distribution system should be looked at again - it takes up too much

time of members. There may be better ways of campaigning. Our Branch contributed about £60 towards the £350 which the campaign cost in this area. Mid. Herts. also deplored the apathy displayed. It appeared that members wanted to contest but were not prepared to turn out and assist in the work.

Other members deplored the lack of support in connection with the campaign (which was fully emphasised in the Parliamentary Committee's report to the E.C. at the time, and circulated to Branches). It was pointed out that now Rule 28 is changed the Party has more scope in its choice of a Constituency. One with large majorities means little press coverage for a small organisation like ours, but where there are marginal small majorities we are likely to be taken more notice of. Comrade Vanni drew attention to the Parliamentary Committee's report of the campaign which had confirmed Glasgow in their view that to contest elections at the present is a waste of time, considering the resources of the Party, the lack of support by members and the small amount of propaganda you are able to do. Comrade May: We do not say that we should not contest elections but that there should be a definite connection between the effort involved and the results we get. Literature sales in Hornsey were negligible - they were not as good as one day in Hyde Park. Outdoor meetings were poor and there was no canvassing and little real contact with the voters. Is it worth it? I am convinced that with the support of Party members and speakers we could have run 21 meetings here, speaking to live people every night, dealing with their questions, and I can guarantee that our literature sales would be better than the combined efforts of both Haringey and S.W. London. In 1945 we had 40 or 50 members every night prepared to come out and work. Young people are with us but they do not help and do not seem interested in selling Party literature. The choice of area is a secondary matter - the important thing is the amount of effort members are prepared to put into it. The campaign last year south and north of the Thames cost the Party approx. £600, and I think it was largely a waste of money. The Parliamentary Committee should look closely at the whole question.

Carried 29 - 4

ITEM for DISCUSSION

Swansea

The Cost of printing Party Literature

There was little discussion on this, Swansea reiterating what they have already reported to the E.C. who are now investigating the matter. Comrade Hardy pointed out that there is not only the question of whether printers are paying T.U. rates, but there is a long-standing ruling of the Party that the printer must be on the T.U. Fair List.

ITEM for DISCUSSION

Merseyside: "That the Party issue more leaflets for free distribution".

The Branch wanted a ready stock of leaflets which give a quick assessment of the Party's case on particular issues - particularly of the Introductory leaflet, which should always be in stock. Gen. Secretary pointed out that it is up to Branches to send their requests for more leaflets to the E.C. who have to look at this question from the point of view of cost.

ITEM for DISCUSSION

Merseyside: "The Party organise a National Sticker Campaign".

Comrade Carney: These stickers are useful for local propaganda and much better than fly-posting, to get the local population to know we are a political Party in that area, and helps to sell our literature. Branches should get out their own drafts. Comrade Weaver stressed the importance of the wording. "Read the 'S.S'" is of no value, but "down with capitalism" has value, and all stickers should carry a symbol which would identify the Party. Lewisham The question is one of priorities. Stickers cost money. We think it is better to knock at people's doors and try to sell the "S.S". Stickers are liable to be stuck on private property which does the Party harm. The Gen. Secretary pointed out that if the police do not catch you it is

O.K. but we have had complaints in the past in regard to stickers which the E.C. has had to deal with. Swansea had found better results from stickers than they had from advertising. Brighton were in favour of having stickers as many members are not prepared to handle bigger stuff.

Floor Resolution, Merseyside: "This Conference recommends the E.C. to organise a national sticker campaign". Carried 17 - 6

Camden

The Economics of Reforms

Comrade D'Arcy. Much of the discussion over the years as to whether the Party should support or advocate reforms has been artificial - this is purely by placing the issue on a political level. In this argument we should obviously consider what happens in the long run. What we should remember is that any particular reform has to be paid for and it has got to be paid for by the capitalist class. Any reform which improves the workers' standard of living has to be got from somewhere - higher wages mean lower profits. What is being said when you advocate reforms is that the workers, somehow or other, through the political machinery, can achieve an advantage by attacking profits. This raises another issue. If the socialist analysis is correct, that the class struggle is waged on the economic field, it means that the workers can only secure higher wages by kicking the capitalist where it hurts, by lowering the rate of surplus value. The workers can, in some instances, gain something on the industrial field, but politically, only if the particular reform coincides with an immediate capitalist interest and it then becomes part of the running of the capitalist system. Capitalists do not bring in reforms under political pressure. Workers ask for a reform and the capitalist will say, we will introduce this as and when we can. There is nothing militant about reformist activity. A reform will only be introduced when the capitalist also wants it. Socialists cannot give support for a good reform or a bad one. In the long run it is the choice of the capitalist as and when reforms can be put into operation.

RESOLUTIONS

Lewisham "That this Conference endorses the E.C.'s 1969 Statement on Reforms"

S.W. London: "That this Conference endorses the 1969 E.C.'s re-affirmation of the Party's case on reformism".

Camden: "That this Conference is satisfied that the statement on reforms and Trade Unions issued by the E.C. in October 1969 accurately re-affirms the Party's policy".

(Policy statements by the E.C. and Manchester Branch).

Addendum: Haringey "With the exception of the final paragraph beginning 'furthermore' which is rejected as unnecessary, ambiguous and giving an impression of hypocrisy".

Lewisham. The Branch were motivated by a vagueness as to why this item is being discussed at all. The question of reforms is what marks out the S.P.G.B. from all other political parties. We have consistently pointed out that as a genuine socialist movement we do not advocate reforms. The statement drawn up by the E.C. in general endorses what the S.P.G.B. has been saying since its inception in 1904. The point is made that the S.P.G.B. does not, as such, oppose social reforms, that a particular issue can be decided on its merits - no socialist should oppose an increase in the Old Age Pension - no socialist in principle can be opposed to social reforms. But whether the S.P.G.B. should advocate reforms is another question. The reason behind this is that it would attract non-socialists to our ranks. These are points which any member joining the Party should know. Manchester say that what distinguishes us from other Parties is that they never set out to be socialist in the first place. But this is not the issue. Manchester also consider that a policy supporting reforms will not attract reformists. But Manchester have not followed this through. It would mean that, in order to get support for socialism you would attract people who do not know what socialism means. If we are going to support Trade Unions to try and improve the conditions of the working class, should we support reforms of political parties? But there is a real difference between the

struggle for reforms and the struggle for higher wages. It is industrial effort that involves workers in trying to keep up their standard of living, but regarding political action in respect of reforms, look at the Labour Party. If you play about with social reforms you will no longer be a revolutionary movement. Haringey:

supported the E.C.'s statement with the exception of the final paragraph commencing 'furthermore'. Does this paragraph mean that we do not use the word 'support'? This is ambiguous and suggests there could be some argument on this point.

A situation might occur where we might support a reformist policy but we were not going to say so. Comrade Hardy (E.C.): If a measure was put forward and socialists had to decide whether or not to vote for it in the light of perhaps some temporary advantage to the working class, the real test should be, is it in line with our Object? We should always bear in mind that anything which reduces the cost of living will not benefit the working class in the long run. Rent control was introduced by the Tories in the interest of the industrial capitalist and the object was stated to be to keep wages down. If you look at the economics of social reform you will find that the Party is right to stick to socialism. While you are arguing about the merits of particular reforms nobody will be putting the socialist case.

Ealing: If you are going to advocate any kind of reform you will find yourselves lining up with other organisations who are also advocating this, which cuts across our hostility clause. We cannot do this and at the same time attack them. Comrade Steele: The real issue is between industrial and political action. You cannot make a real division between wage bargaining and T.U. activity. There is the growing power of the State. Wage bargaining is declining as an instrument in the class struggle.

One member stated that a political reform to, say increase Old Age Pensions, is not the same as Trade Union activity on the industrial field over the question of the division of surplus value, which goes on in spite of the attitude of any Political Party. Where we do not see eye to eye with Trade Unions is not because of what they are doing but because they regard their activity as an object in itself, and they are becoming more and more reactionary.

<u>Haringey Addendum:</u>			Lost 15-21
Lewisham Resolution Carried			22-10
S.W. London	"	"	21-10
Camden	"	"	22-10

ITEM for DISCUSSION

Haringey: "How should Party members vote in local referendums"?

Haringey: We think that part of the E.C.'s statement on reforms is unreal in that it deals with a hypothetical situation. We are concerned with what is a real situation. How should Party members vote in a local referendum on a particular measure that will affect the interest of the working class as a whole? There are three alternatives:-

1. Under all circumstances members should write 'socialism' across their ballot papers when there is no socialist candidate.
2. The S.P.G.B. should discuss the situation and issue a statement stating how to vote.
3. It should be left to individual members as socialists to make up their own minds which way to vote.

The Branch is in favour of No. 3. We see no harm in voting for a measure which would benefit the workers as long as it does not harm other workers. We do not think that the Party as an organisation can come to a policy decision on these matters. We have to live under capitalism and there are some problems which do not concern us as socialists.

ITEMS for DISCUSSION

Westminster The need for a brief summary of the Party position touching on such aspects as state capitalism etc. as an addendum to the D. of P: this Declaration in future to have a note as to its historical origin.

Camden Are the Principles of the D. of P. out of date?

Westminster:

Is the D. of P. a sufficiently comprehensive and modern summary of the Party's case for regular publication on leaflets and in the "S.S"?

Westminster: Some members of Westminster Branch feel that the D. of P. is out of date almost in its entirety and they see a fairly valid reason for not including it in any literature published by the Party. There are others in the Branch who feel that although the D. of P. is valid in content it is written in the language of the 20th century. Some of our members would like to have some sort of a footnote, not an addition, mainly for the benefit of young people and new members: (1) that the D. of P. was written when the Party was formed - two or three lines would be sufficient (2) that the D. of P. although comprehensive when they were first written, today do not touch on certain things which are of fundamental importance, both to members and sympathisers. The D. of P. although making correct observations on capitalism, does not mention State Capitalism, which has grown up over the past 60 years. This might be considered only as a footnote and as a summary at the bottom of the D. of P. S.W. London were opposed to changing the D. of P. in any shape or form - there would be too much argument as to what should go in its place. Camden. In putting forward their resolution, stated they were not suggesting that the D. of P. is out of date but because of some of the discussions we have heard of late years we feel that some members do not fully appreciate them. There is not a word in the D. of P. which does not exist today. If you want to add something, put that it was drawn up in 1904 and that it still stands. Comrade Sawyer (E.C.). We should be able to distinguish between the principles and the language in which they were written. The language of the D. of P. is out of date and it would be a good idea to have an additional explanation as Westminster suggests. It would help in developing socialist understanding amongst workers. Comrade Moss (C.B.): Hull: The language of the D. of P. causes amusement amongst young people. We should try to be more direct. People do not draw the implications of the D. of P. easily. Comrade Zucconi. If Westminster think the D. of P. is out of date, what need is there for an addendum? The D. of P. is an historical document, like the Communist Manifesto. If anyone becomes interested in the S.P.G.B. they won't stop at the D. of P.

Comrade Dale, Ealing: You only describe language as archaic when you don't like the ideas it contains. Comrade Ballard, Publicity Cttee. agreed that the form of presentation of the D. of P. is of secondary importance but that does not mean that it is of no importance. Today we have to be publicity conscious and certain ideas are associated with a certain form. One form can be associated with an antiquated organisation and one with a modern one. The D. of P. does not distinguish us from other organisations, it does not specifically deal with State Capitalism. Baldwin (E.C.): The D. of P. has never been put forward by the Party as a lazy man's guide to end all future investigation and thinking. What is its real function? That is the touchstone. What has enabled us as a ready reference to assess situations if it is not the D. of P? No compromise, no leadership, no joining other organisations, and the class struggle. It does not relieve us of the necessity of writing articles on topical subjects. The living and vibrant language of the D. of P. is infinitely preferable to me to some of the language we hear today. Comrade May, winding up: The majority of Westminster Branch are not interested in altering the D. of P. I personally would be proud to see at the bottom of the D. of P. a statement that they were drawn up by the founder members of the S.P.G.B. in 1904. It would explain why the language is in those terms. All that some of our members wanted was a statement at the bottom pointing out some aspects of capitalism, such as State Capitalism, and 'race'.

Redbridge's Item for Discussion deploring the condition of the shop front at H.O. was not discussed as the Chairman pointed out that this matter was already receiving the attention of the E.C.

Edinburgh's Item for Discussion regarding payment of dues was not dealt with owing to lack of time.

The E.C.'s Report to Annual Conference was adopted on the motion of Comrades Buick and Lawrence.